

VERTIGO

BILL WILLINGHAM • STEVE LEIALOHA

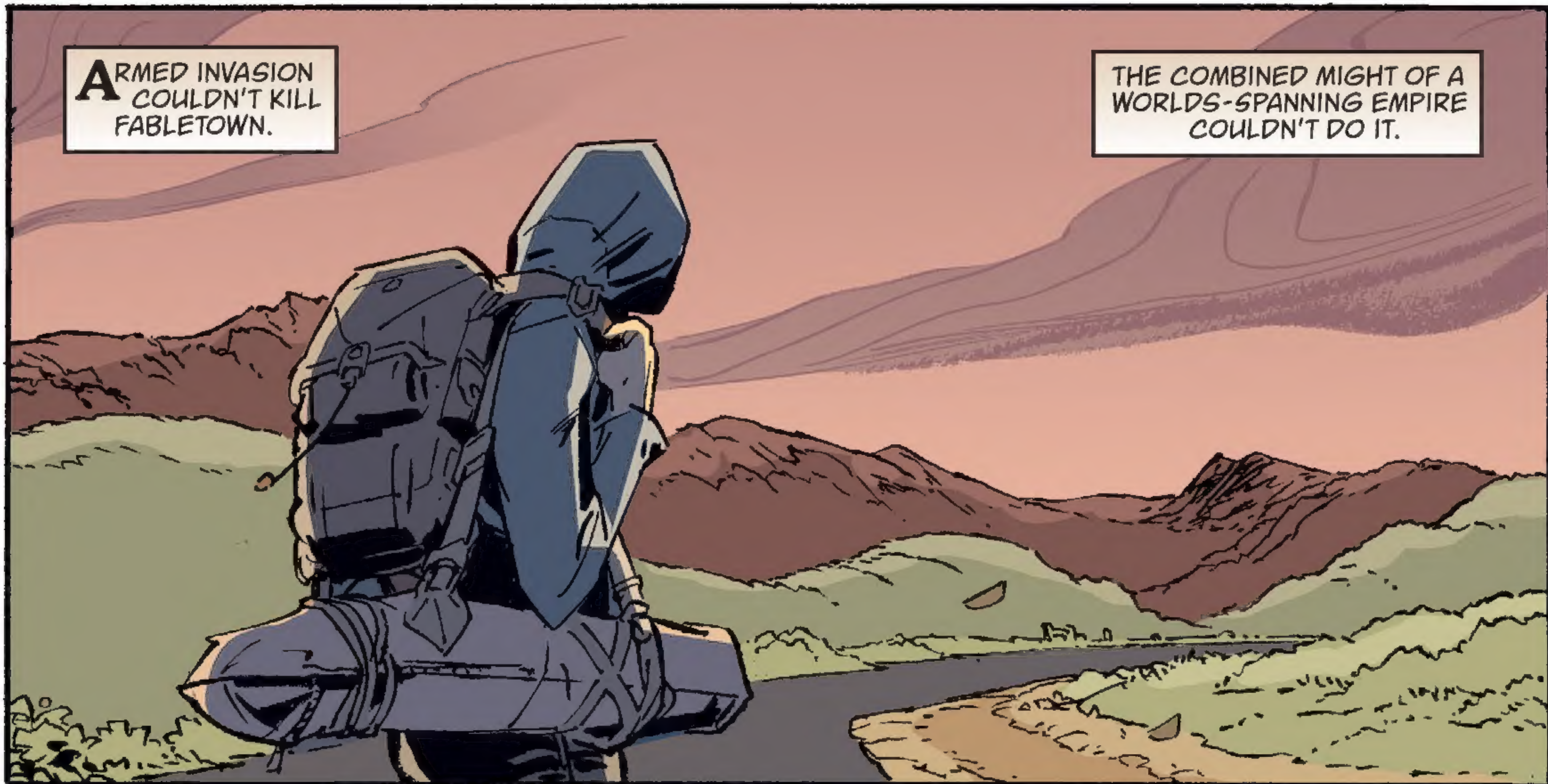
139 May '14

suggested for
mature readers
vertigo.com



ARMED INVASION
COULDN'T KILL
FABLETOWN.

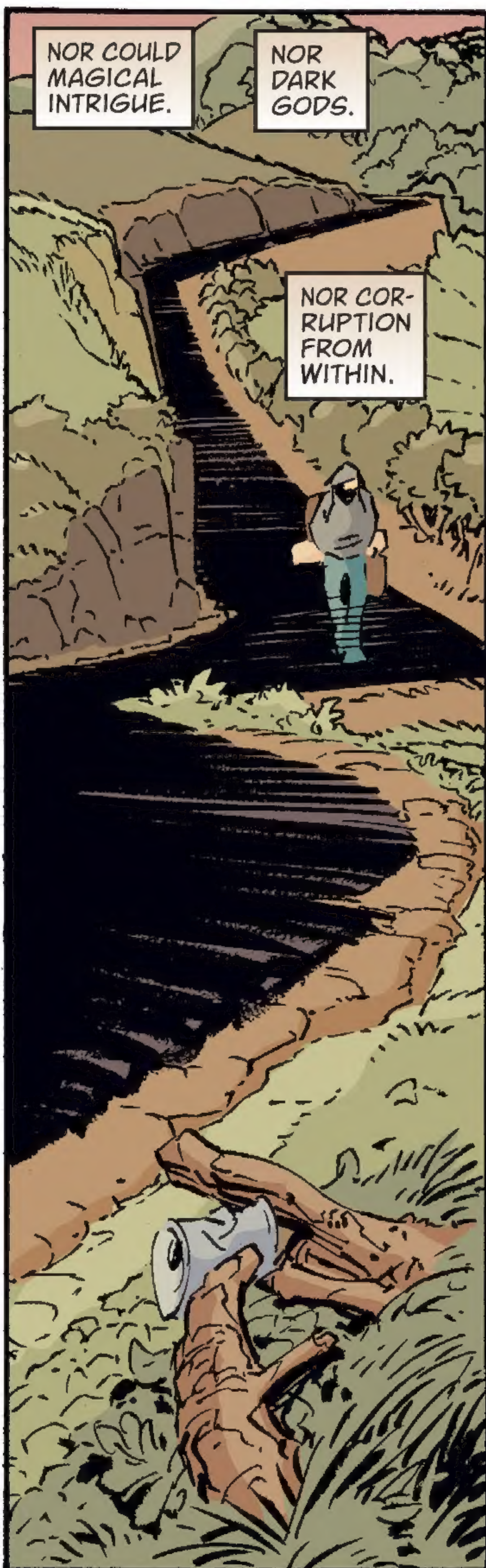
THE COMBINED MIGHT OF A
WORLDS-SPANNING EMPIRE
COULDN'T DO IT.



NOR COULD
MAGICAL
INTRIGUE.

NOR DARK
GODS.

NOR COR-
RUPTION
FROM
WITHIN.



WHEN IT FINALLY DIED,
IT DIED FROM AN *IDEA*.

YOW!



THAT
WAS--!

SUCH
THINGS
THEY HAVE
HERE!



RATHER, IT WAS MORE
THE *REMINDER* OF
AN IDEA.

LAND OF
HARSH AND
INDIFFERENT
MIRACLES.



The Boys in the Band

Part 1 of 2

In which the members of Boy Blue's informal Farm band embark on a small adventure that leads to the final and inevitable destruction of Fabletown.

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Steve Leialoha artist
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Todd Klein letters
Nimit Malavia cover
Sara Miller asst. ed.
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IT'S PARTY NIGHT UP AT THE FARM.

THE BEER AND WINE FLOW, IF NOT QUITE **FREELY**, THEN WITH ENOUGH ENTHUSIASM SO AS TO INSPIRE AND LUBRICATE A GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF BONHOMIE.

AS USUAL, THERE'S DANCING, DRUNKEN SPEECHES, BOASTS PROVEN AND OTHERS SUBJECT TO LATER, SOBER REVIEW.

HELLO, WHAT'S ALL **THIS**, THEN?

WHAWP-BOPPA-DOOEY!

AND, AS ALWAYS, THERE'S THE **BAND**.

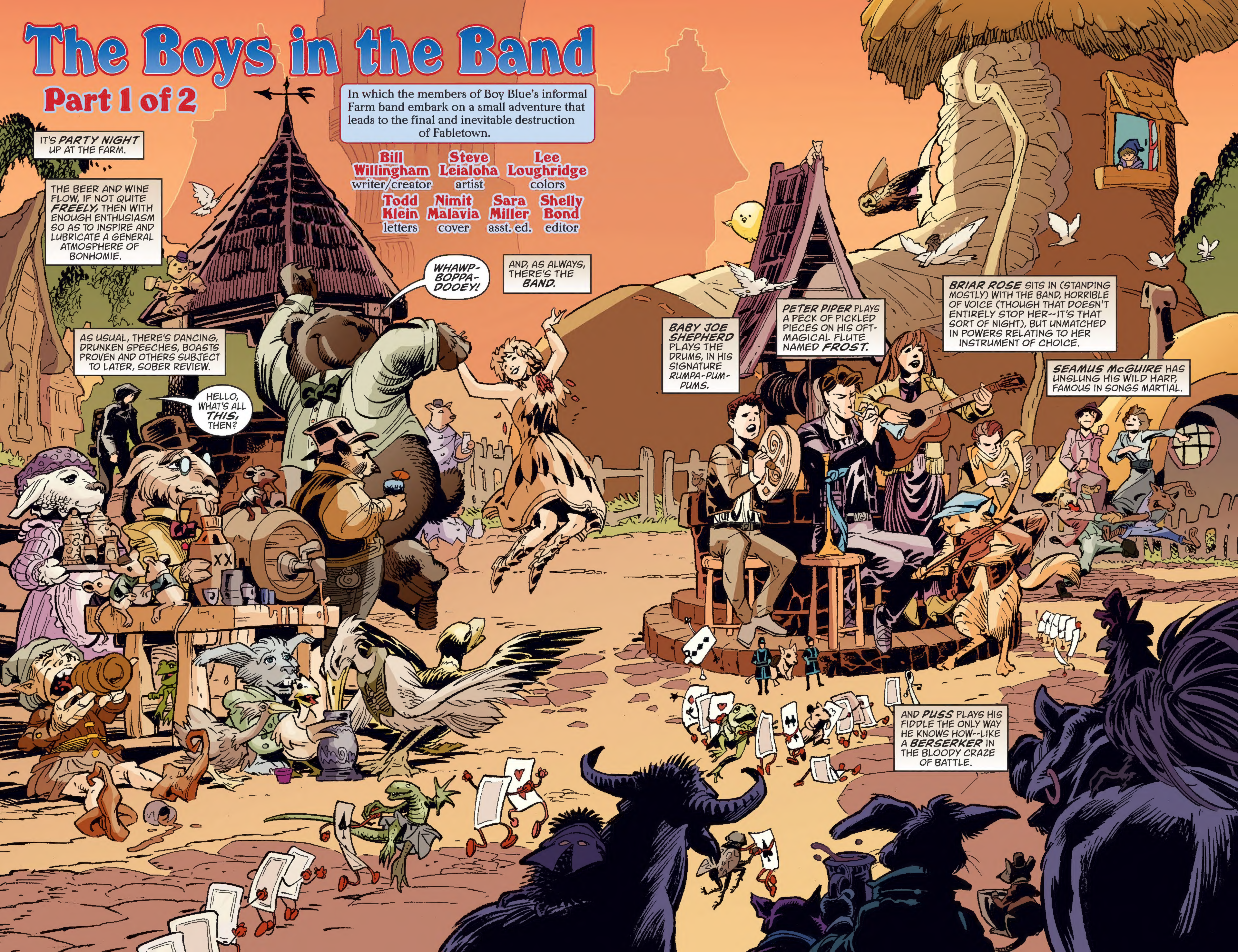
BABY JOE SHEPHERD PLAYS THE DRUMS, IN HIS SIGNATURE RUMPA-PUM-PUMS.

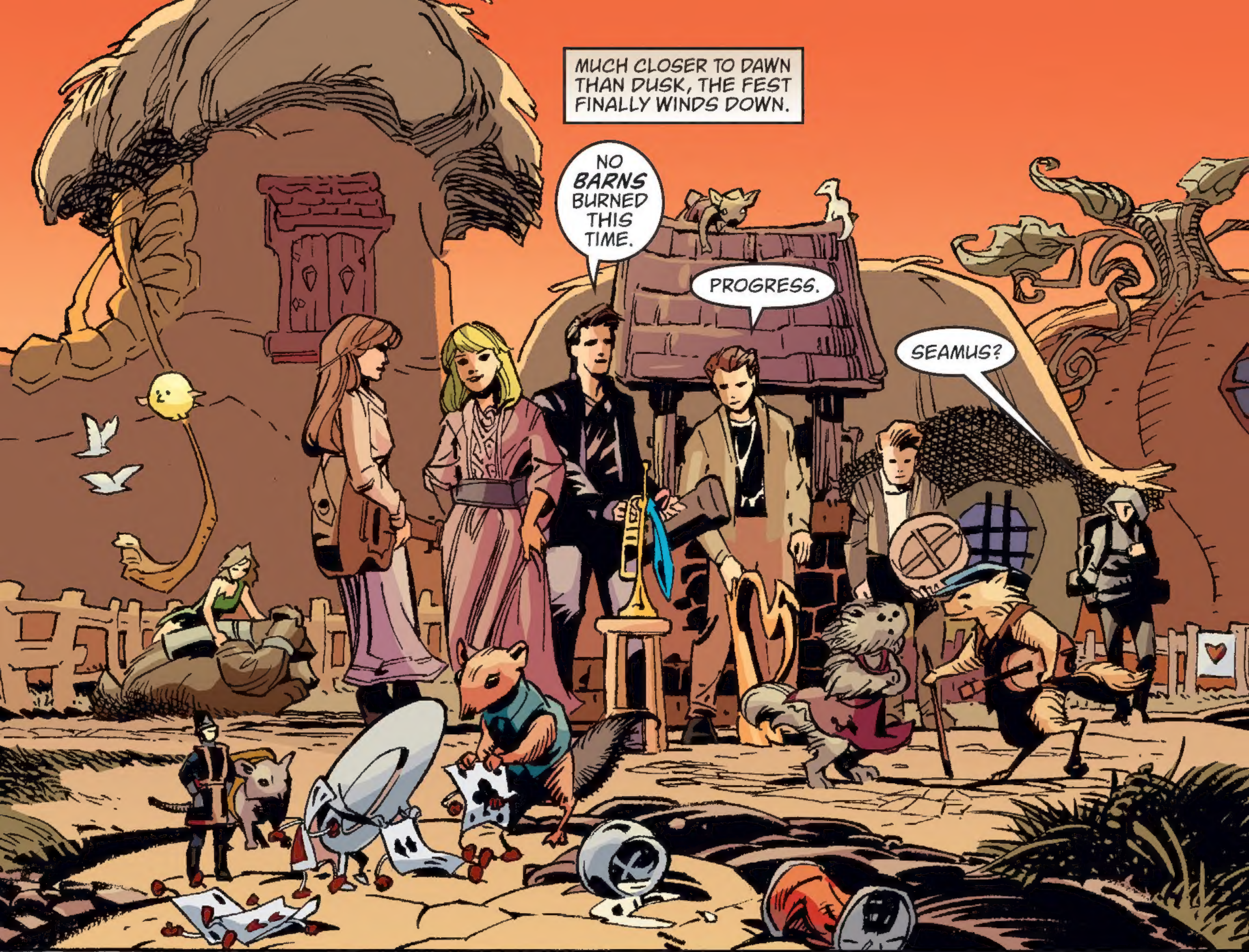
PETER PIPER PLAYS A PECK OF PICKLED PIECES ON HIS OFT-MAGICAL FLUTE NAMED **FROST**.

BRIAR ROSE SITS IN (STANDING MOSTLY) WITH THE BAND, HORRIBLE OF VOICE (THOUGH THAT DOESN'T ENTIRELY STOP HER--IT'S THAT SORT OF NIGHT), BUT UNMATCHED IN POWERS RELATING TO HER INSTRUMENT OF CHOICE.

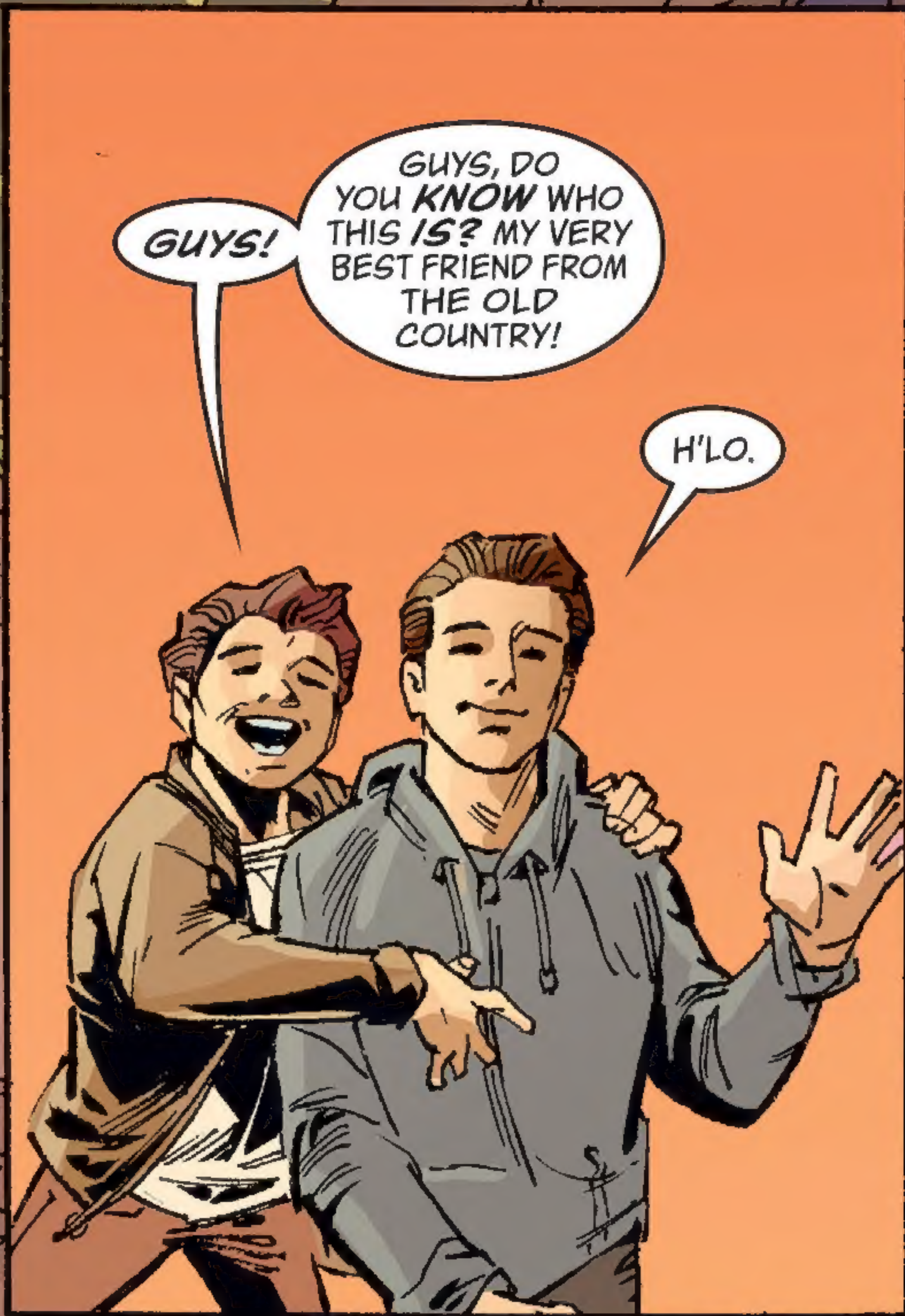
SEAMUS MCGUIRE HAS UNSLUNG HIS WILD HARP, FAMOUS IN SONGS MARTIAL.

AND **PUSS** PLAYS HIS FIDDLE THE ONLY WAY HE KNOWS HOW--LIKE A **BERSERKER** IN THE BLOODY CRAZE OF BATTLE.





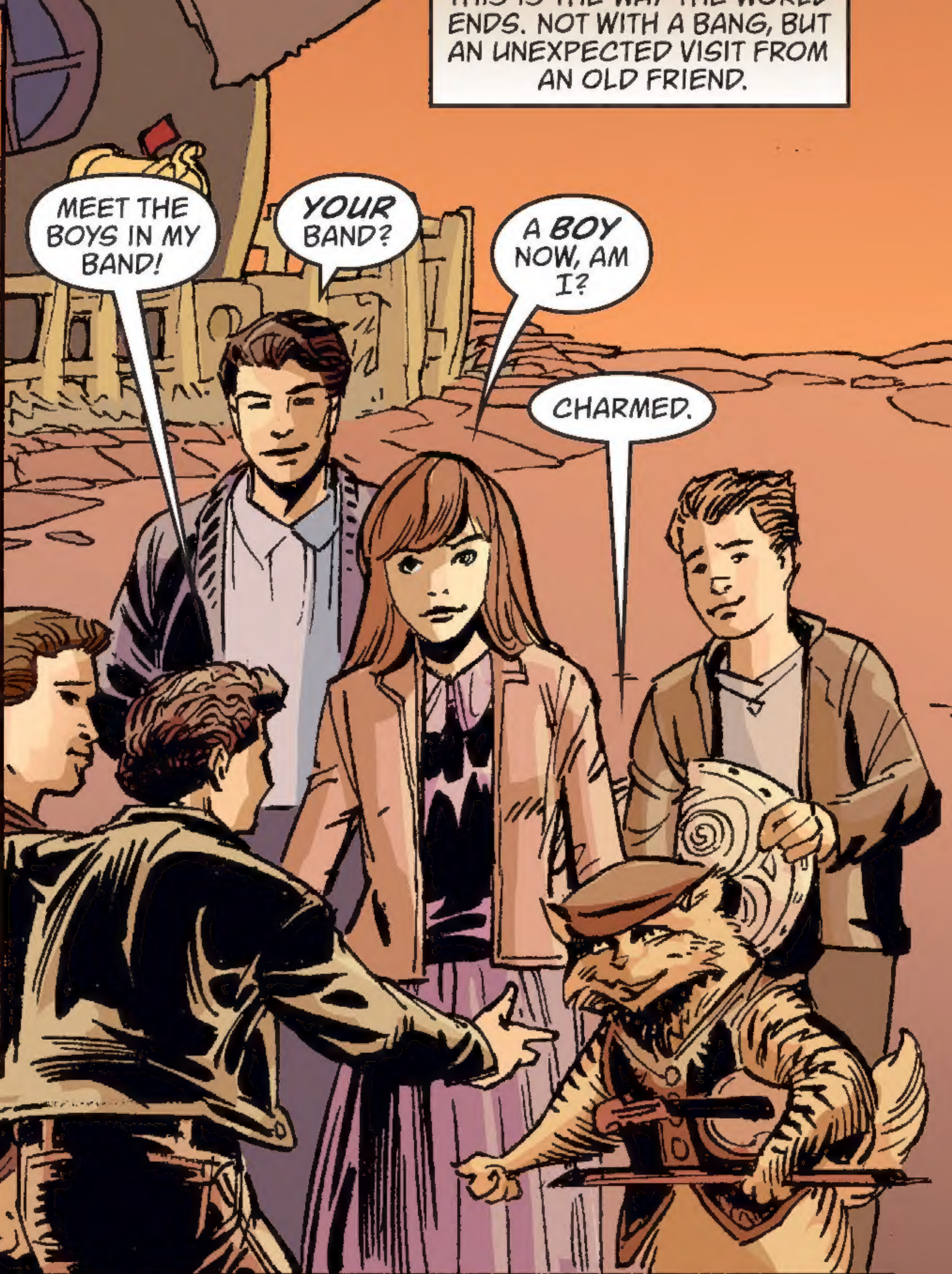
THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS. NOT WITH A BANG, BUT AN UNEXPECTED VISIT FROM AN OLD FRIEND.



GUYS!

GUYS, DO YOU *KNOW* WHO THIS *IS*? MY VERY BEST FRIEND FROM THE OLD COUNTRY!

H'LO.



MEET THE BOYS IN MY BAND!

YOUR BAND?

A *BOY* NOW, AM I?

CHARMED.



...MAYBE A *DRAM* TOO MUCH.

HOW'VE YOU BEEN, DANNY? I NEVER *KNEW* YOU ESCAPED TO THE MUNDY WORLD.

I DIDN'T.



I STUCK IT OUT. HID IN THE HEATHERS AND THE *HIGHLANDS* THROUGH ALL THE YEARS OF THE EMPIRE'S OCCUPATION. LIVED ROUGH BUT FREE.

AND I VEXED THE OCCUPIERS WHEN I COULD.



ALL THOSE YEARS? AND YOU NEVER COULD **ESCAPE?**

NEVER TRIED.

YOU KNOW YOUR DAD'S WORDS, SAME AS I. "A MAN IS A **MAN** ONLY AS LONG AS HE FIGHTS FOR WHAT'S **HIS**. DEATH IS THE ONLY EXCUSE TO STOP."

DID YOU **FORGET**, SEAMUS? OR WILL YOU NOW FOLLOW ME HOME TO FIGHT AGAIN FOR IT?



I **CROSSED** WORLDS AND ENDURED TERRORS TO **FIND** YOU, SEAMUS.

THE EMPIRE'S GONE, AT LONG LAST, BUT **OTHER** FELL POWERS HAVE MOVED IN TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR ABSENCE.



IT'S TIME TO GIRD ON YOUR FATHER'S SWORD ONCE AGAIN, BOY.

IT'S TIME TO COME **HOME**.



HOME.

YES, OF **COURSE** IT'S TIME.

THERE GOES THE BAND.

HUH?



MORNING THE NEXT...

OKAY, DANNY BOY, I GUESS I'M AS READY AS I'LL EVER BE.

NO, YOU'RE NOT.



BEST PUT YOUR BLADE IN MY **DUFFEL**, UNTIL WE'RE FULL CLEAR OF THE MUNDY WORLD.

MANY A TIME I GOT STOPPED IN THIS INSANE LAND BEFORE I LEARNED TO KEEP MY VARIOUS **MANCUTTERS** OUT OF SIGHT.

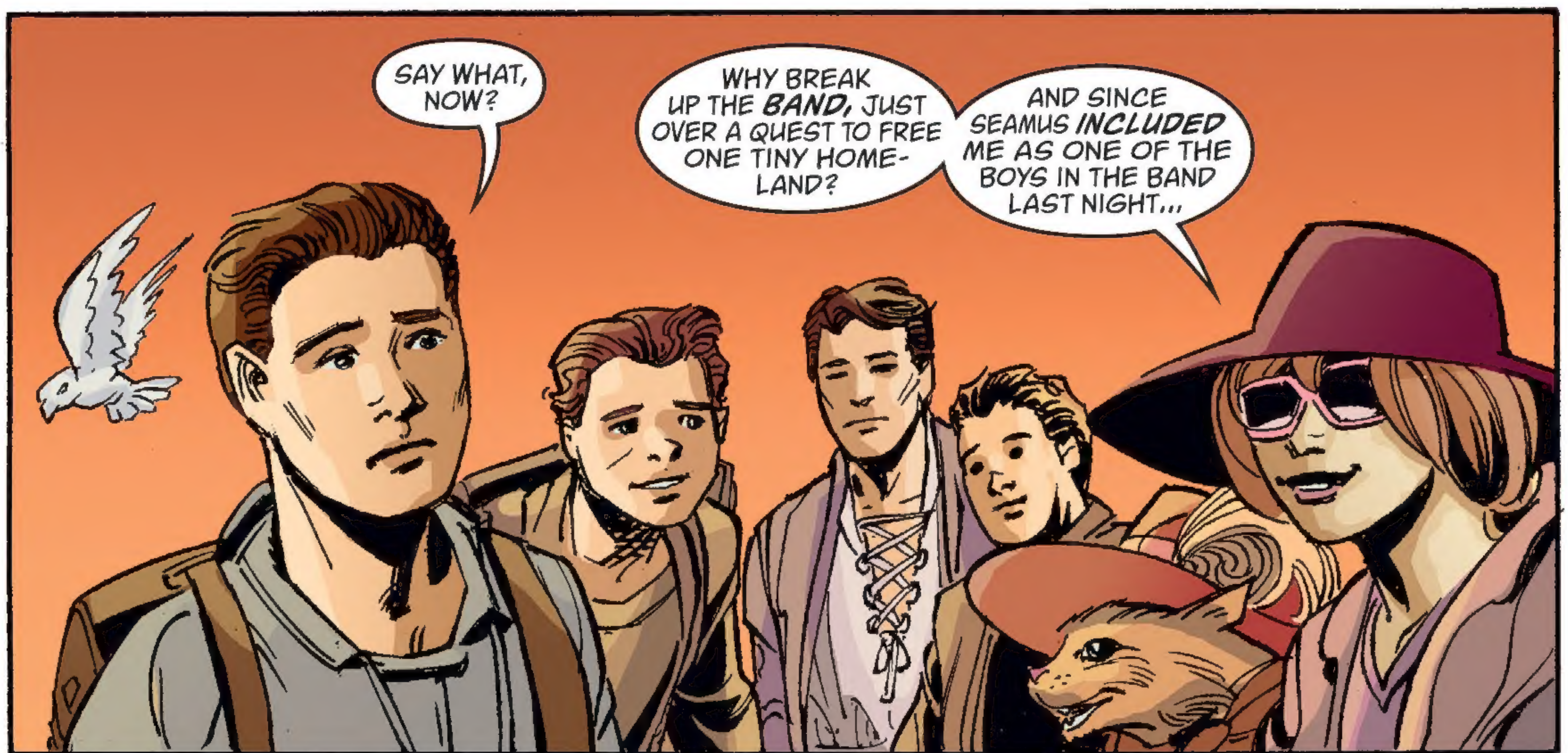


AH, I SEE YOU'VE GOT SOME **FAREWELLS** TO SPEAK BEFORE WE GO.

NOT QUITE.

WE TOOK A VOTE.

SEEMS WE'RE GOING WITH.



SAY WHAT, NOW?

WHY BREAK UP THE **BAND**, JUST OVER A QUEST TO FREE ONE TINY HOME-LAND?

AND SINCE SEAMUS INCLUDED ME AS ONE OF THE BOYS IN THE BAND LAST NIGHT...





IT'S A FAIR
DISTANCE TO THE
GATE THAT LEADS
TO THE WORLD THAT
LEADS TO THE WORLD
THAT LEADS TO
HYBERNIA.

TWO
MONTHS OF
HIKING, IT
TOOK.



AND **THAT**
WAS AFTER WORKING
MY PASSAGE ON A
SHIP.

AND BEFORE
THAT, WELL...



SUFFICE IT TO SAY
WE'VE A **LONG ROAD**
AHEAD OF US.

FULL OF
DANGERS IN SOME
CASES.



MAYBE
NOT.

TRUE, I
LIKE AN ADVENTURE
AS MUCH AS THE **NEXT**
FABLE, BUT THERE'S NO MORAL
ADVANTAGE IN ROUGHING IT
ON THE **WAY** TO THE
ADVENTURE BITS.

THREE DAYS OF COMFORTABLY
PAID TRAVEL HENCE...

DIDN'T I
MENTION BRIAR ROSE
IS LOADED?

TOO BAD PUSS HAS
TO STAY HIDDEN IN THE
CABIN FOR THE ENTIRE
CROSSING.

ONLY SIX DAYS
TO THE MUNDY VERSION
OF SCOTLAND. HE'LL
BE FINE.

...TERRIBLE
THINGS PLAGUING
OUR HOMELAND...



"THE **BAOBHAN SITH** BEING THE
WORST OF THEM.

"SHE SEEMS TO HAVE
SUBJUGATED THE OTHER
MONSTERS. SET HERSELF
UP AS THEIR **WITCH
QUEEN**."

"AND NOW CLAIMS TO BE
OUR **NEW** QUEEN AS WELL,
TRADING ONE TYRANT FOR
ANOTHER, AS IF THAT'S THE
NATURAL WAY OF THINGS."



"THEN THERE'S HER CHIEF LIEUTENANT,
THE **BROCHAN WEIR**--OR MAYBE
THAT'S HIS PROPER NAME.

"I'VE BEEN INSPIRED TO
AVOID HIM AND SO NEVER
HAD THE CHANCE TO ASK.

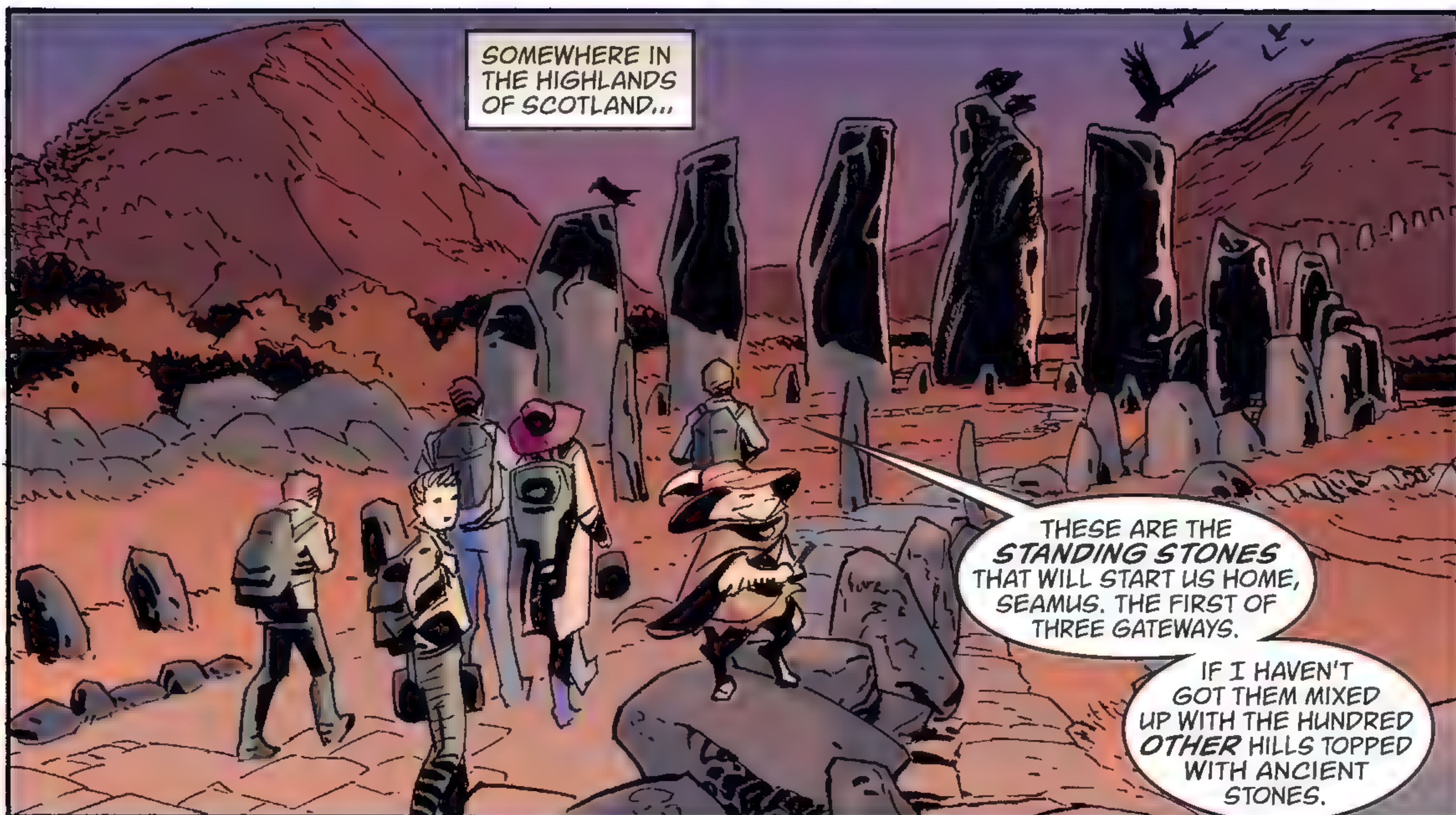
"WORD IS HE'S
A **MEAN** ONE,
THOUGH.

"HIS DARK
SWORD CAN
DRINK A
MAN'S LIFE
WITH A
SINGLE
SCRATCH.

"BUT THAT ISN'T THE
WORST. THOSE SO CUT
DON'T DIE NORMAL.

"THEY TRANSFORM.
BECOME A **SLAUGH**,
TURNED BACK FROM
THE GATES OF PARA-
DISE AND FORCED TO
WANDER THE LANDS
AS AN EVIL SPIRIT."

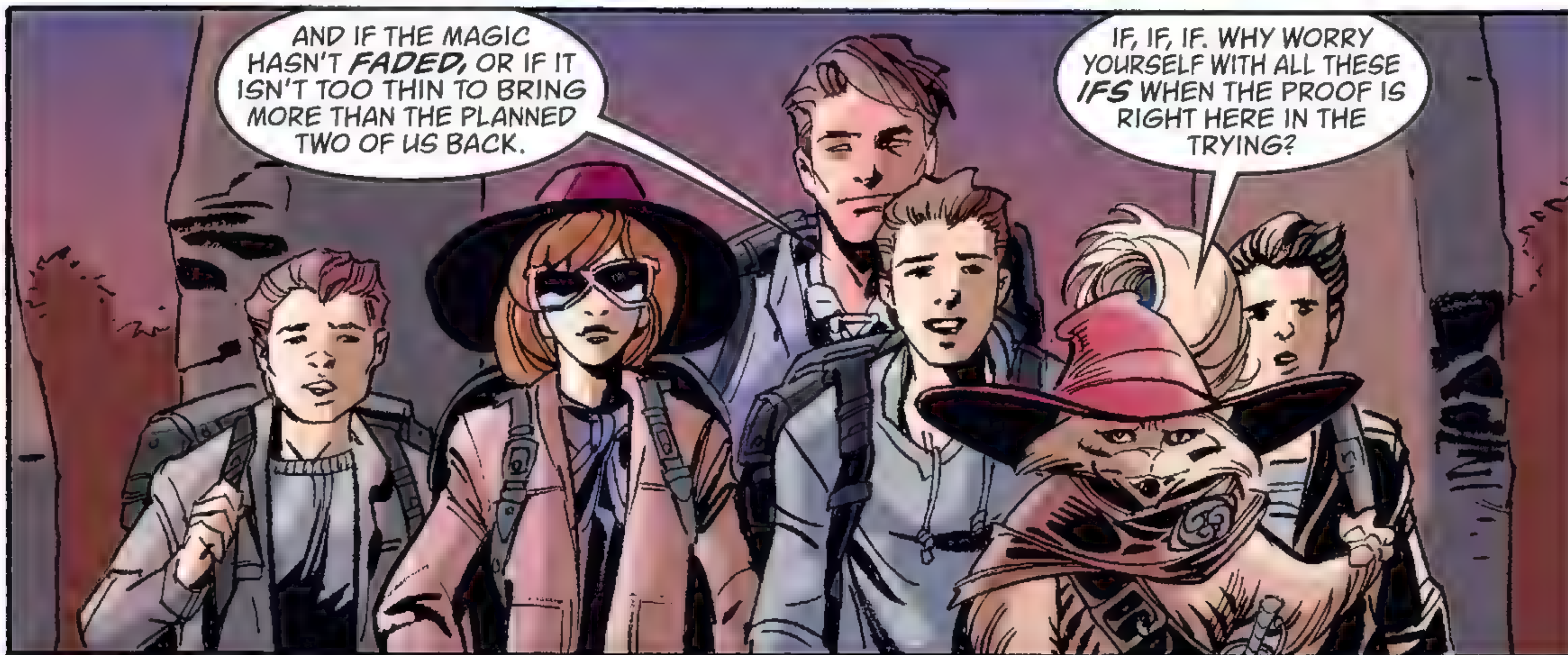




SOMEWHERE IN
THE HIGHLANDS
OF SCOTLAND...

THESE ARE THE
STANDING STONES
THAT WILL START US HOME,
SEAMUS. THE FIRST OF
THREE GATEWAYS.

IF I HAVEN'T
GOT THEM MIXED
UP WITH THE HUNDRED
OTHER HILLS TOPPED
WITH ANCIENT
STONES.



AND IF THE MAGIC
HASN'T **FADED**, OR IF IT
ISN'T TOO THIN TO BRING
MORE THAN THE PLANNED
TWO OF US BACK.

IF, IF, IF. WHY WORRY
YOURSELF WITH ALL THESE
IFS WHEN THE PROOF IS
RIGHT HERE IN THE
TRYING?



TRUE,
ENOUGH, I
SUPPOSE.

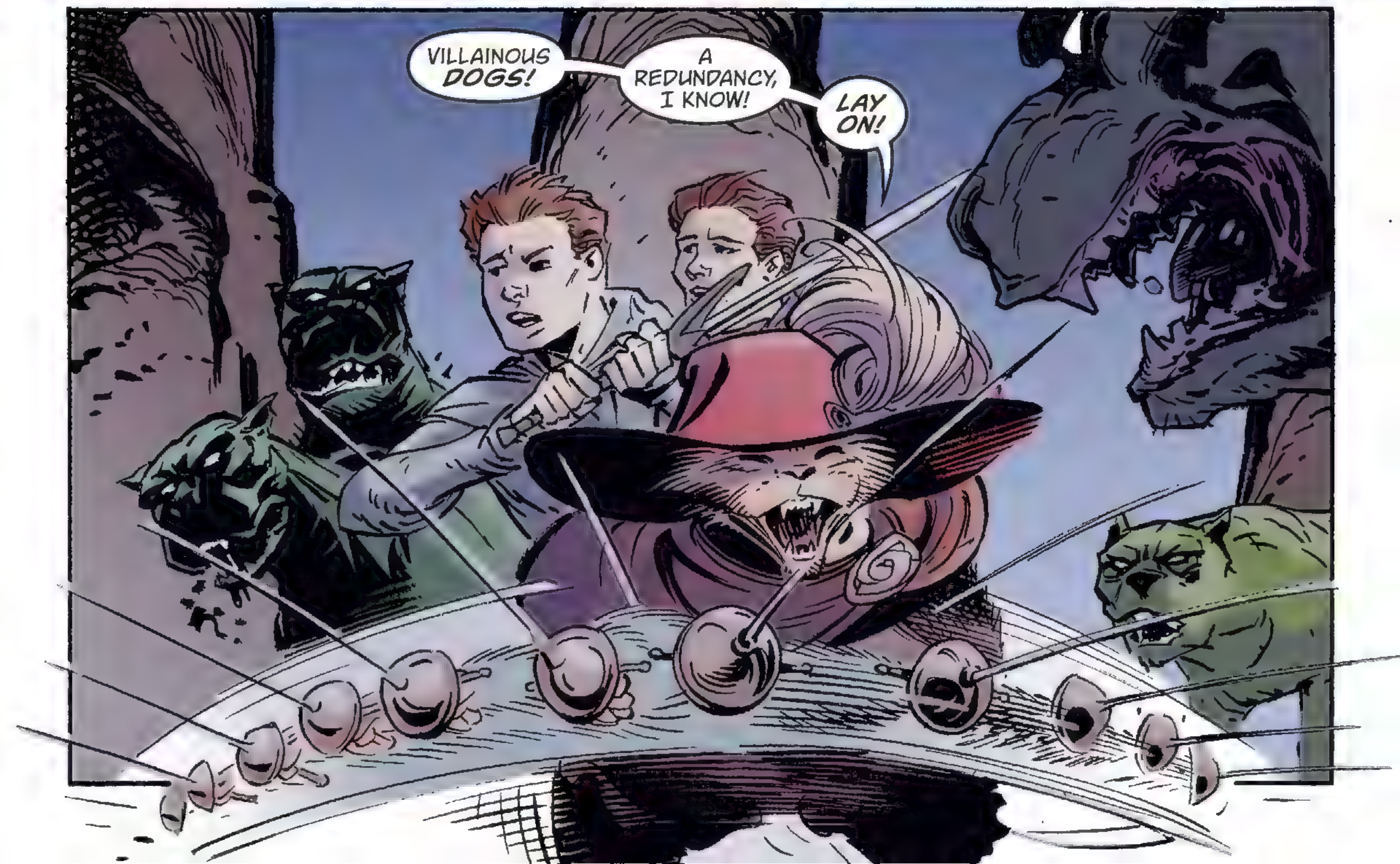
IN ANY CASE, THIS
IS THE TIME TO TURN
BACK, WHILE YOU'RE
STILL IN YOUR MUNDY
WORLD.

RECONSIDER
NOW OR NEVER
AT ALL.

TURN
BACK
NOW?

DO YOU
TAKE US FOR
PUSSIES?







KARRAG!

ARRIVING
IN THE MIDDLE OF
A *FIGHT* BETWEEN
STRANGE CREATURES,
ALL OF WHOM ARE
STRANGERS TO
US.

HOW DO
WE DETERMINE
WHOSE *SIDE*
WE'RE ON?

DOGS
ARE THE *BAD*
GUYS! 'TIS
EVER THE
CASE!

IN *THIS*
CASE, PUSS
IN BOOTS IS
RIGHT. THE
CU SITH ARE
SERVANTS
OF OUR
ENEMY.

MAKING
THE GIANT OUR
ALLY BY
DEFAULT?

SURE.
WHY
NOT?



H'YALP!



TRYING TO FORCE
YOUR WAY THROUGH MY
GUARD, MONGREL
HOUND?

CAN'T BE
DONE!



HNNG!



EVIL
THINGS!



DEAD
THINGS, YOU
MEAN!

DON'T
COUNT
YOUR--!

AW,
T'HELL
WITH ALL
PROVERBS!
JUST KEEP
FIGHTING!

EVERY WARRIOR HOPES FOR A QUICK BATTLE, WHEN IT CANNOT BE AVOIDED ENTIRELY. THOSE THAT DRAG ON TEND TO COME AT A DEAR COST.

GAN TROFF!

NO, VILLAINOUS CUR!

LEAVE OFF YOUR AMBITION TO GNAW TASTY GIANTS!

YOUR DESTINY'S TO DIE ON A CAT'S THRUSTY BILBAO!

I THINK WE'RE WINNING!

ARE WE WINNING?

WHAT ARE THESE THINGS?



HRUFF!
HRUFF!
HRUFF!

THAT WAS--!

INTENSE!

DID WE GET THEM ALL?

NEARLY!

INJURIES?

WOUNDED?

SPEAK UP IF--

WHAT WERE THOSE THINGS?







IN TIME...

SO, IF YOU
AND THOSE LIKE YOU
COULD JOIN US IN OUR
QUEST TO *RID* THIS
LAND OF--

NONE OF MY
AFFAIR. DON'T EVEN
LIKE SPEAKING YOUR ODD
SPEECH, WHICH SQUIRMS
LIKE *WORMS* ON MY TONGUE,
HARDLY TO BE SPAT
OUT.

IT'S MY
HIGHLAND SHEEP
AND MY OWN BUSINESS
THAT CONCERNS
ME.

ATTITUDE LIKE
THAT, WHO'LL YOU *TURN*
TO WHEN EVERYONE ELSE
IS DEAD AND SHE SENDS
HER *DOGS* AFTER
YOU?

THOSE WHO INSIST
WE ALL BAND TOGETHER
TEND TO SEE THEMSELVES
IN *CHARGE*. EMPIRE
WANTED US ALL AS A
SINGLE PEOPLE TOO.
EASIER TO CONTROL
THAT WAY.

BETTER
TO LEAVE
EVERYONE
ALONE.

KILL THE
BAOBHAN
SITH, IF YOU
CAN.

THEN
KILL WHAT
COMES *AFTER*
HER, AND WHAT
COMES
AFTER.

NONE OF
MY LOOK-
OUT.

NOTHING
MORE ATTRACTIVE
THAN GRATITUDE.



FAREWELL,
SMALL ONES.
I WISH YOU
FORTUNE.

BEST WE
MOVE ON, TOO.
SOMEONE WILL COME
SNIFFING AFTER THEIR
LOST TROOPS SOON
ENOUGH.

AS SOON
AS *PUSS*
RETURNS.



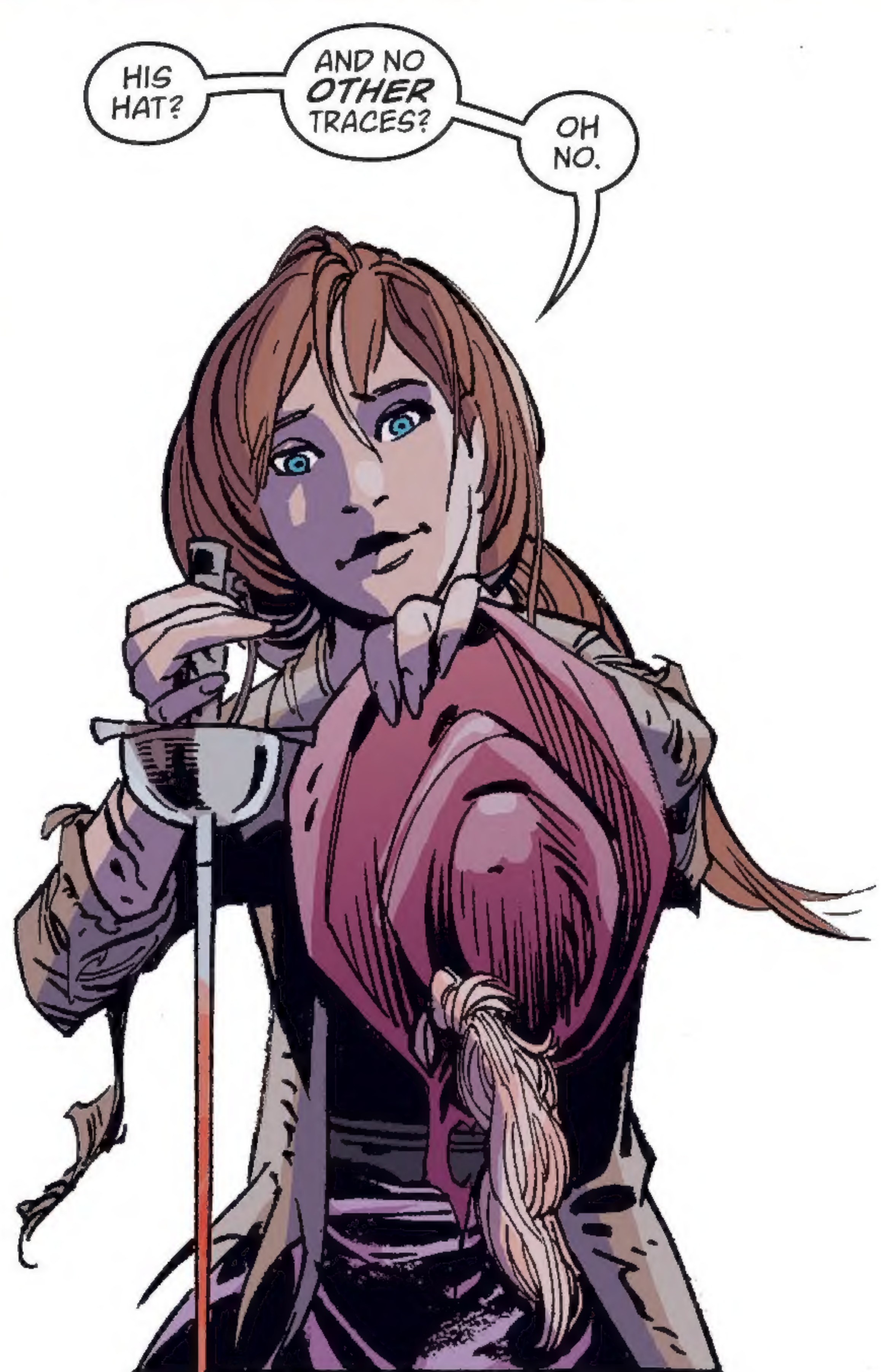
WAIT.

THAT'S
HIS *RAPIER*. HE
WOULDN'T RUN OFF
WITHOUT IT.

UH
OH.



AND
THIS?



HIS
HAT?

AND NO
OTHER
TRACES?

OH
NO.

NEXT: PUSS IN BOOT HILL!

GRAPHIC CONTENT

AMERICAN VAMPIRE: SECOND CYCLE

We're back. Finally. And I could not be more excited.

And look, I know this isn't normally the place for confessional, but humor me for a moment... because even though Rafa and I had always planned a break around the middle of the series, and even though I knew it was coming, and even though I had a lot of other high-profile work in the interim, the honest truth is that being away from this series crushed me. Absolutely crushed me. I've been dying to get back on American Vampire (as has Rafa) all year.

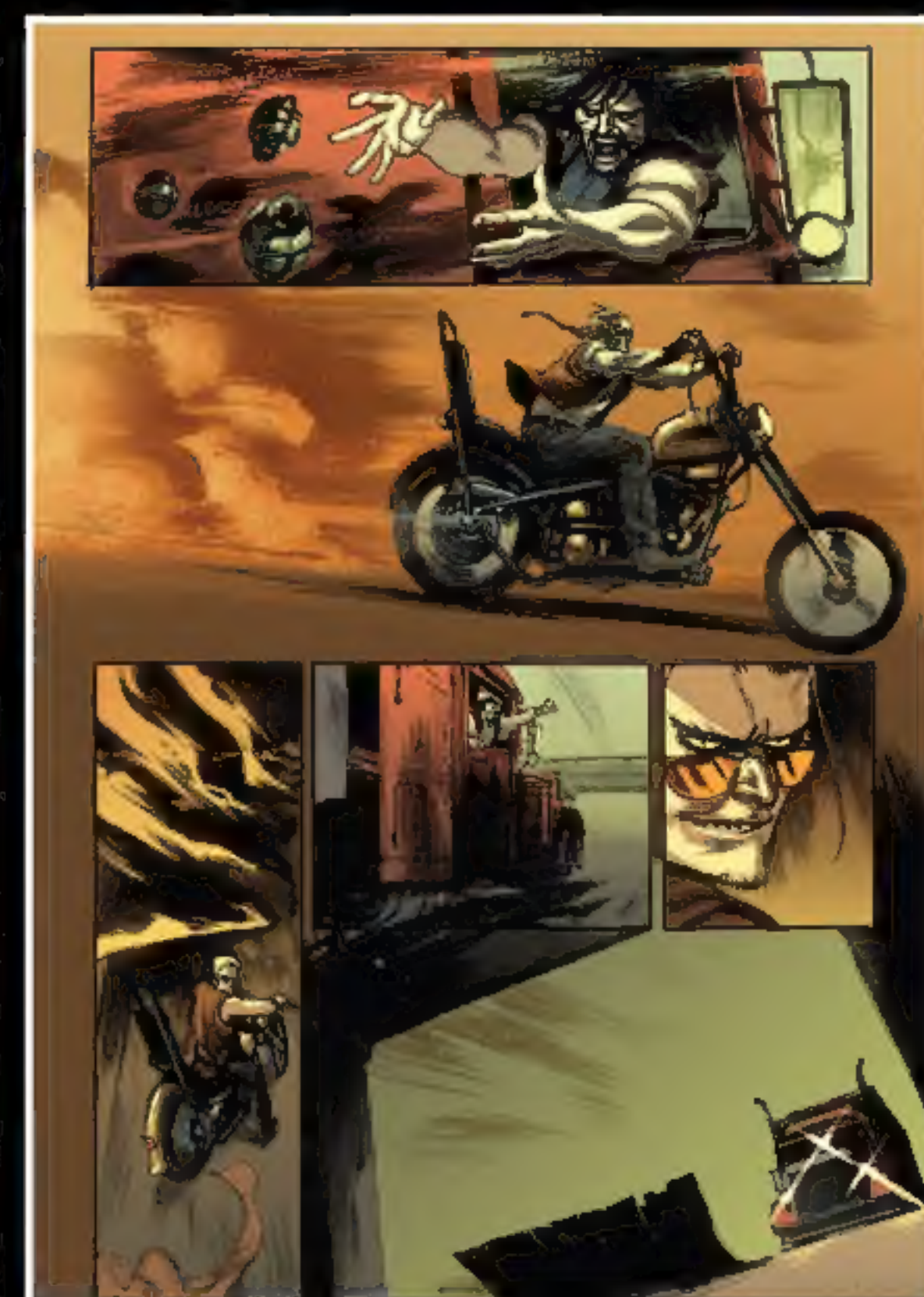
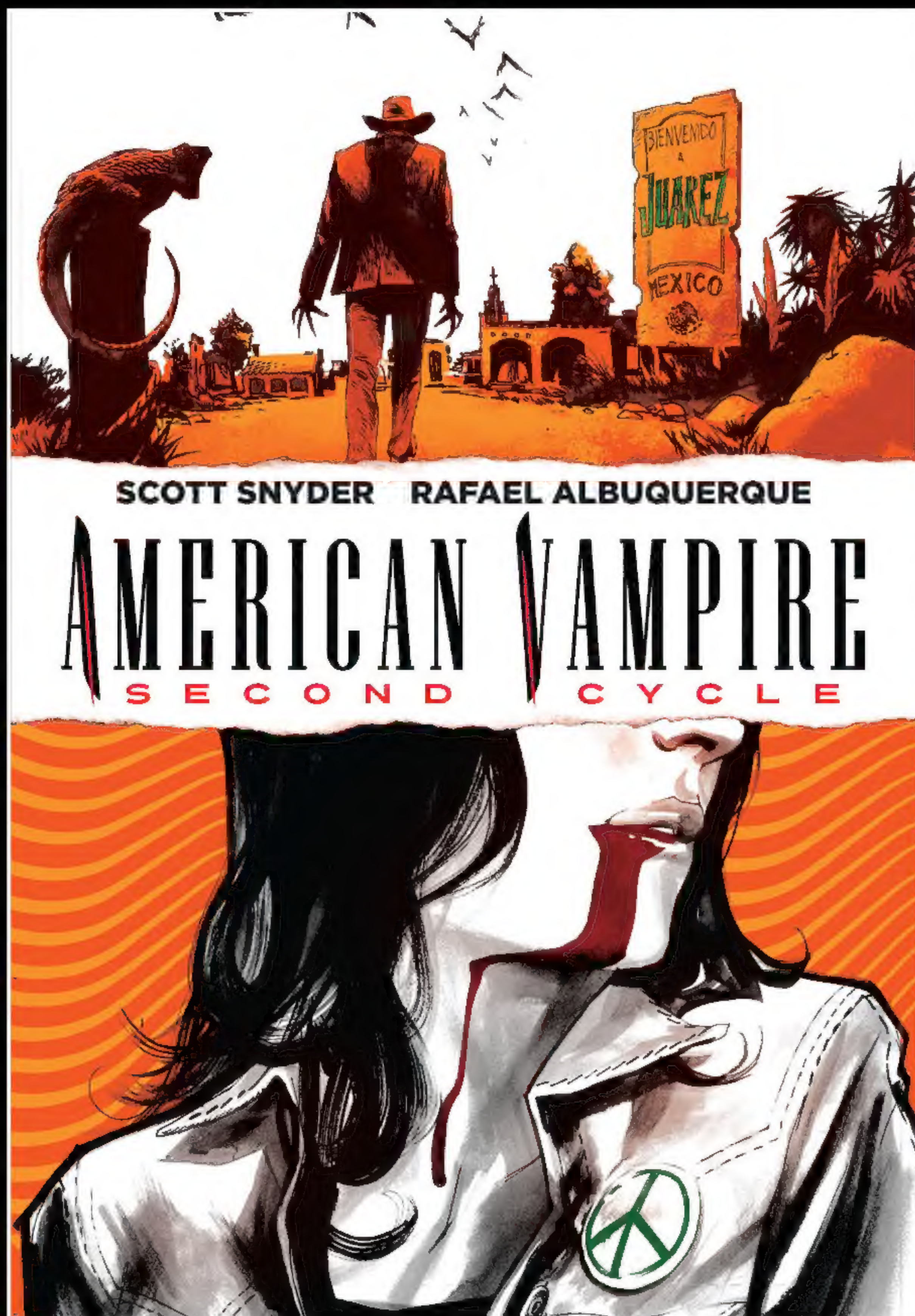
So in San Diego this past summer, Rafa and I made a pact: Not only would we never step away again, but we would make this half of the series the best material we've done on the book, hands down.

Now, if you've never read American Vampire, this is designed as a perfect jumping-on point. On the other hand (claw?), if you **have** been reading us, get ready, because all your favorite characters - human and monster - are back. Pearl, Skinner, Calvin, Felicia, Gus. The Ancients. The Firsts. Dracula himself... We spent the first half of the series expanding the world of American Vampire, showing you the scope of the mythology. This half is about bringing the characters old and new crashing together with nothing less than the fate of the country hanging in the balance. So get ready for what's been coming all along. Every character, every species, old and new... it all comes down to this. Who is the Gray Trader? Where did the bloodline start? Where will it all end? Who will live and who will die? The war starts here. In issue #1.

– Scott Snyder, Co-creator

AMERICAN VAMPIRE: SECOND CYCLE

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NATHAN